

January 6, 2004

Mr. Kent Morgan  
Planning Department  
City of Lincoln  
555 South 10<sup>th</sup> Street  
Lincoln, NE 68508

Dear Mr. Morgan;

Please pass on the following letter to the Multi-Modal Transportation Task Force members. Thank you and thank you to them for your efforts for alternative transportation in Lincoln.

Robert Boyce

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Ladies and Gentlemen of the Multi-Modal Transportation Task Force;

Subject: It is safe to bicycle in downtown Lincoln.

As a long-time bike commuter, I applaud your efforts to promote "alternative" transportation in Lincoln. I am very glad to see Lincoln making this effort, and hope for strong, positive outcomes. I have been interested in this subject for years, being a member of the Bicycle Safety sub-committee of the Lincoln Traffic Safety Committee some 25 years ago, and having attended numerous meetings of the Pedestrian Bicycle Advisory Committee in recent years. In addition, I am in the midst of making an analysis of bicycle-motor vehicle collisions in Lincoln from 1998-2002.

An important point was made at your first public meeting last fall—that you need to distinguish between perception and reality. Your recommendations about alternative transportation should be based on reality.

The perception of many people is that biking in downtown Lincoln is dangerous. This belief does not agree with actual police records of collisions, nor with my extensive experience. This belief was expressed at that first meeting, and as no public response was permitted, I was not able to rebut that statement. Here is my very belated rebuttal.

The reality is that biking in downtown Lincoln is safe (based on a study of bicycle-motor vehicle collisions), so long as the bicyclist observes the rules of the road, which

make him or her visible and predictable. Engineering changes are not needed to make biking downtown safe.

Of the 241 bicycle-motor vehicle collisions in Lincoln reported to police from January 2000 to September 2001, only 19 occurred in downtown Lincoln. Only 19 collisions in a 21-month period.

Of these 19 collisions, 15 happened to bicyclists riding on the sidewalk, and 4 riding in the street. Sidewalk riding is known to be much more likely to result in collisions, as the sidewalk bicyclist is not predictable and is not visible until he or she enters the street—when it's too late. In addition, sidewalk riding is illegal in downtown Lincoln.

The 4 street collisions downtown—only 4 out of 241—only 4 in 21 months—happened as follows:

No. 1—The biker was drunk.

Nos. 2 & 3—The biker was in the wrong position in the lane—too far to the right. In one case he was at the edge of the lane, to the right of a car which turned into a diagonal parking stall, and he rode into the side of the car. In the other case the biker started to pass a truck which had slowed or stopped. He passed on the right side (the edge of the lane—where a bike lane would be), and the truck turned right and hit him.

No. 4—A motorist pulled out from a stop sign, failing to yield right of way to a biker. (He said he could not see the biker because of the glare of the sun in his eyes.) The position of the biker in the lane was not reported, but may have contributed to the motorist not seeing him.

So what is the reality of biking in downtown Lincoln? Only 19 collisions in 21 months. In every case but one, the biker was doing something which put him or her at risk—riding on the sidewalk, being in the wrong lane position, being drunk.

The reality is that bikers who rode downtown and followed the rules of the road did not have collisions (with one possible exception) in this 21 month period—they were safe. Perception and reality—not the same at all.

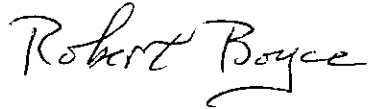
The recommendations of the Multi-Modal Transportation Task Force must be based on reality. We want to encourage people to use bicycles as transportation. We want to encourage people to bicycle downtown.

What needs to be addressed is the erroneous perception that biking downtown is dangerous. Education is needed. Training in safe biking is needed. Enforcement is needed to get bicyclists off sidewalks. A change is needed in Lincoln's ordinance which requires a bicyclist to ride "as far right as practicable" under all circumstances. This ordinance needs to be changed to agree with Nebraska state law, which permits the bicyclist to use the full lane when it is unsafe to share, because of the width of the lane.

Engineering changes based on false perceptions are not needed. Engineering changes to make it "safe" to bike in downtown Lincoln are not needed, because in fact it is already safe to bike downtown.

Please base your recommendations on the reality, not on false perceptions. Thank you for your consideration.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert Boyce". The signature is written in dark ink and has a fluid, connected style.

Robert Boyce

Daily commuter into downtown Lincoln for 32 years without an accident!

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Lincoln, NE 68510

475-0783

email: [rboyce@inebraska.com](mailto:rboyce@inebraska.com)

Copy: Pedestrian Bicycle Advisory Committee.